**Train accident at Latur, Maharashtra**

142. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that five persons were killed in Latur district of Maharashtra due to a collision between a train and a vehicle at a manned railway crossing;

(b) if so, how did the accident happen at a manned railway crossing in Latur recently;

(c) whether it is a fact that the gates were open at the time of the accident; and

(d) if so, the details of the accident and the steps proposed to avert such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. On 19.06.2004, six persons died and 2 persons were injured in an accident involving a light engine and an autorickshaw at the manned level crossing gate No. 5 in open condition between Latur and Latur Road stations in Latur District in Maharashtra. The accident occurred due to failure on the part of the locomotive driver to observe laid down precautions. Preventive steps like counselling of drivers and monitoring of their performance, regular checks at level crossings, and awareness campaigns for educating road users for observing necessary precautions at level crossings have been taken.

**Strengthening of Railway Protection Force**

†143. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to strengthen Railway Protection Force;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the amount likely to be incurred by Government to fulfil this objective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.